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ABSTRACT

This museum survey furnishes comprehensive information and findings on America's museums. It is hoped that the survey findings will assist museums in assessing themselves as part of a major cultural field, private and public funding sources in determining museum needs, and the public in understanding the role of the museum in community and national cultural life. Survey procedures are outlined for topics of data collected, qualifying criteria for inclusion in the survey, sampling techniques, questionnaire development, and data analysis. Survey results are summarized and presented graphically in relation to museum type, operating budget and expenditures, governing authority, regional distribution, income, programs and exhibitions, attendance and accessibility, trustees and personnel, and facilities and financial status. Detailed results and analysis of the entire museum survey will be contained in a book prepared by the National Endowment for the Arts to be released in spring 1974. (Author/KSM)

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museums usa: highlights

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national endowment for the arts

foreword

The National Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts for some time have recognized the need for comprehensive information on America's museums. Thus, the Council in May 1972 directed the Endowment to undertake a major national museum survey in close cooperation with the museum profession. This survey is the first of its kind to be conducted in the United States of museums of all types.

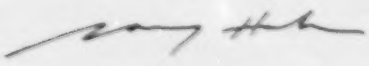
It is hoped that the survey findings will be of great assistance to museums in assessing themselves both individually and as part of a major cultural field; to private and to local, state, and federal government funding sources in helping to determine needs; and to the public in understanding the role of the museum in the life of the community and the nation.

The survey certainly will be useful to the Council in the development of the Endowment's Museum Program. In fiscal 1971, the pilot year of the program, funds for museums totaled $927,000—more than the entire amount of Endowment support for museums for the five preceding years. By fiscal 1973, the Museum Program had increased fivefold to $4.6 million. The National Council has recommended continued expansion of this program, which has evolved steadily since its establishment and now offers assistance in twelve categories, including aid to special exhibitions, utilization of permanent museum collections, catalogues, conservation, and renovation (climate control, security, and storage). Hundreds of museums of all types have been assisted.

The problems that beset American museums today were made clear to me in their broadest terms when I worked on The Belmont Report, the 1968 American Association of Museums study commissioned by the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. In more recent years, as Chairman of the Endowment, I have had many opportunities to visit all sorts of museums and to talk with a wide variety of museum professionals and board members. By reviewing the inquiries and applications that come into the agency, I have been given a sense of the museum problems. Though clearly

some are unique to museums, and especially to certain kinds of museums, many can be put in the perspective of the needs of all cultural institutions, and more importantly in the perspective of the great potentials of all cultural institutions to improve the quality of life of this nation.

This brochure merely highlights the results of the museum survey. It has been prepared by the Endowment to return to the museum profession as quickly as possible some of the major findings based on the information they so generously provided.



Nancy Hanks, Chairman
National Council on the Arts
National Endowment for the Arts

Detailed results and analysis of the entire museum survey will be contained in a book currently being prepared by the National Endowment for the Arts for release in spring 1974. The Endowment is grateful to the museum directors and their staffs who participated in the study and to the museum professionals whose advice and counsel continue to contribute to this effort.

November 1973

survey procedure

Research for the museum study was conducted by the National Research Center of the Arts, Inc., an affiliate of Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., under contract to the National Endowment for the Arts. In the developmental phases of the study, NRCA was advised by a panel of 26 museum experts, representing museums of all types throughout the country. Further assistance was given by national museum associations: the American Association of Museums, American Association for State and Local History, American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums, American Federation of Arts, Association of Art Museum Directors, and Association of Science Museum Directors.

The data collected for the national museum survey covered every major aspect of museum operations: the purposes and functions of the institution, programs, collections, exhibitions, accessibility, attendance, trustees, management and personnel, facilities, budget and finances. Information was examined and analyzed both in the aggregate and by type of museum, budget size, governing authority, and geographical distribution.

The scope of the study extended to all types of museums. Six criteria developed by the museum experts were used to determine whether or not an institution qualified for the survey:

- The institution has permanent facilities open to the public on a regularly scheduled basis.
- The facilities are open three months or more per year and a minimum of 25 hours per week during at least three months of the year.
- The operating budget for fiscal 1971-72 (excluding money spent on major capital improvements or acquisitions for collections) averages a minimum of $1,000 for each month the museum is open.
- At least part of the collection exhibited is owned by the institution.
- The institution has at least one full-time paid employee with academic training or special knowledge relating to the major subjects represented in the collection.
- The institution is a non-profit tax-exempt organization.

For inclusion in the study, an institution had to meet all six criteria. Using lists supplied by the American Association of Museums, the Office of Education, and the Smithsonian Institution, approximately 1821 museums in the 50 states and the District of Columbia were identified as meeting these criteria. Of these 1821 museums, a representative sample of 728 was selected for interviewing. The sampling was scientifically designed to reflect accurately the distribution of the 1821 museums by type, by region, by budget size, and by governing authority. All 164 museums with operating budgets of $500,000 and over were interviewed. Approximately one-half of the middle-sized museums ($100,000 to $499,999) and one-third of the smaller museums (under $100,000) were interviewed. (The disproportionate weight given to larger museums was statistically corrected in the final tabulations.) In the survey, all references made to museums are in terms of the 1821 that the universe comprises.

Once the questionnaire was developed and field tested and the interviewers briefed by NRCA, interviews were conducted with the museum director, the primary respondent in the survey. Information was collected in two stages: during the initial visit the interviewer obtained basic attitudinal and statistical data; on the return visit the interviewer secured completed budget, personnel, and trustee forms and asked an additional series of questions on finances. Data in all areas were collected for the fiscal year 1971-72 (defined as the fiscal year ending in 1972, or in December 1971 if the fiscal year was the calendar year). Each questionnaire was then checked for completeness and accuracy and further inquiries were made when necessary. To ensure that the financial data supplied by the museums conformed to the survey requirements, the accounting firm of Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co. reviewed the statements.

survey results

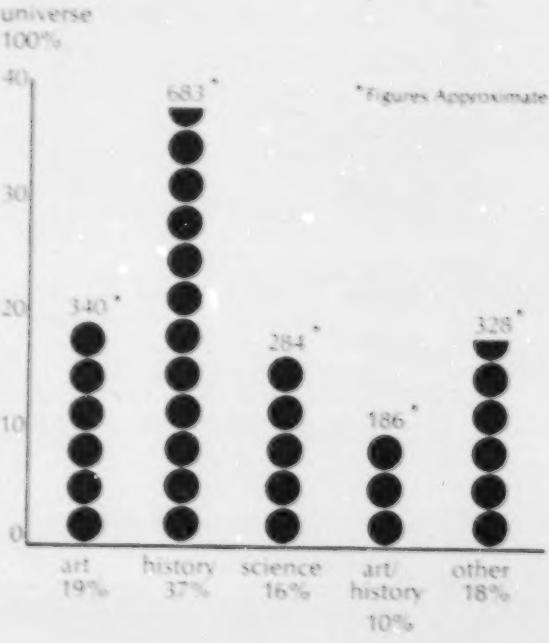
museum type

Museums were categorized into five types: art, history, science, art/history, and other museums with equal emphasis on either art and science or history and science or art, history, and science.

As defined in the survey, history museums include historic sites and museum villages in addition to the more conventional type of museum. Among the science museums are natural history museums, science technology museums, zoos, aquariums, and botanical gardens.

According to this classification of the 1821 museums, more than one-third (thirty-seven per cent) are exclusively or predominantly history. Nineteen per cent are art, sixteen per cent science, and ten per cent art/history. Among the eighteen per cent of museums with combined subjects, nine per cent are art/history/science, six per cent history/science, and three per cent art/science.

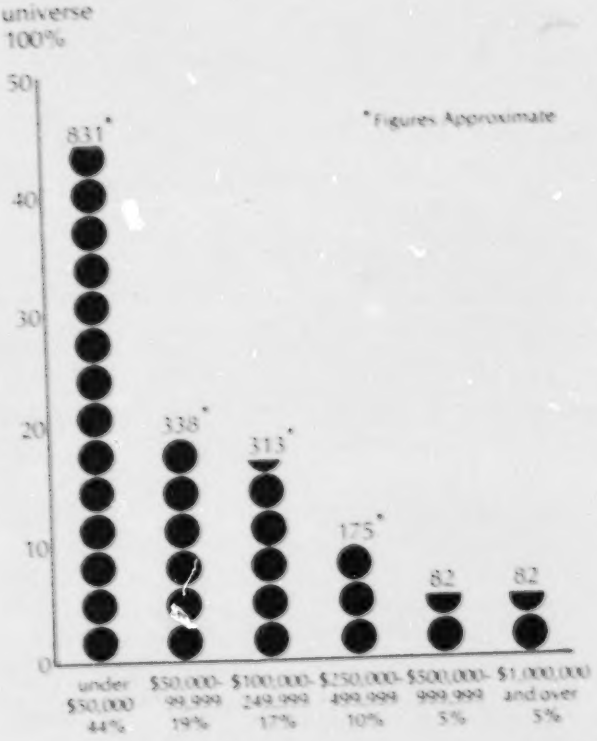
museum type



operating budget

Museums are grouped by the size of their fiscal 1971-72 operating budgets, which are defined as all expenditures except those for major capital improvements or acquisitions for collections. The overwhelming majority of museums are small when measured by budget size. Forty-four per cent had annual operating budgets of less than $50,000 and another thirty-six per cent expended between $50,000 and $249,999. Ten per cent had operating budgets of $250,000 to $499,999. Ten per cent had budgets of $500,000 and over. The annual operating budgets of the museums reflected in this survey ranged from $3,700 to over $20,000,000.

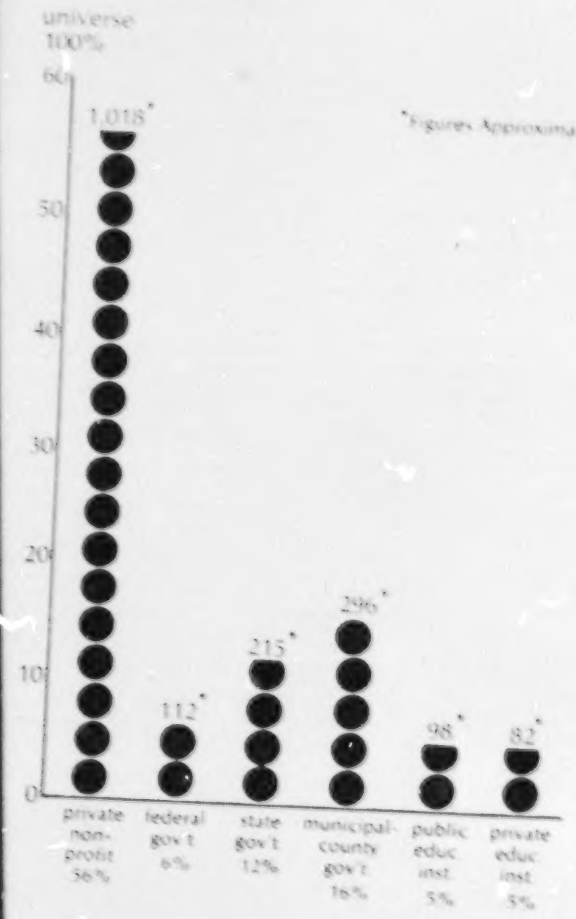
operating budget
fy 1971-72



governing authority

The governing authority is defined as the agency or organization that ultimately owns the assets and collections of the museum though not necessarily the buildings and grounds. More than one-half (fifty-six per cent) of the nation's museums are governed by private non-profit organizations. The second largest category consists of museums governed by either municipal-county, state, or federal government (thirty-four per cent). Public or private educational institutions govern the remaining ten per cent.

governing authority

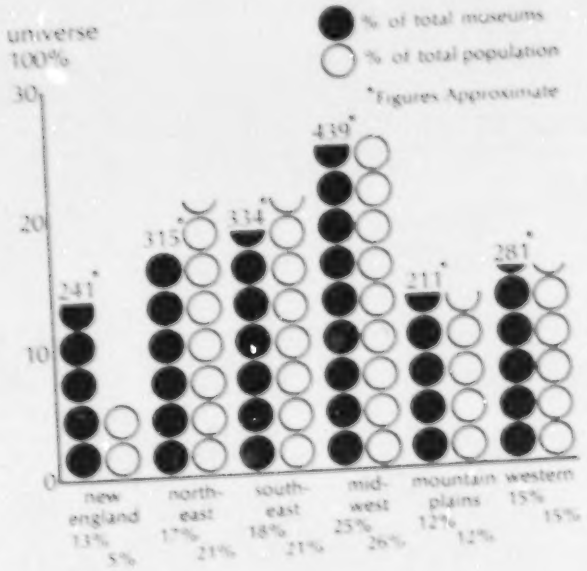


region

The distribution of museums across the country roughly parallels the distribution of population. The one exception is New England which has thirteen per cent of the nation's museums but only five per cent of its population. The six regions used in the survey conform to those of the American Association of Museums:

New England (6): Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont.
Northeast (6): Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania.
Southeast (12): Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia.
Midwest (8): Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin.
Mountain Plains (10): Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Wyoming.
Western (9): Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington.

regional distribution



A variety of interrelationships, some of which are noted below, are shown by a comparison of the data within the four basic categories:

- When comparing museum type by budget size, history museums constitute the highest percentage of museums operating on less than $50,000, while those with budgets of $1,000,000 and over are art or science.
- When comparing budget size by governing authority, educational institutions have the smallest percentage of museums with budgets of $500,000 or more.
- When comparing governing authority by museum type, art and art history museums have the highest percentage of private non-profit organizations as governing authorities. History museums have the highest percentage with a government agency as controlling authority.
- When comparing regional distribution of museums by budget size, the largest percentage of museums with budgets of $250,000 and over are located in the Northeast and Midwest.

income

Of the total income received by the 1821 museums in fiscal 1971-72 ($513,341,000), sixty-three per cent was provided by the private sector and thirty-seven per cent by the public sector. The sources of income from the private sector were:

- Private support (twenty-one per cent of total income) including contributions and donations from individuals, foundations, and corporations, membership funds, and allocations from colleges and universities. Individuals provided almost one-half of the private support.
- Operating revenues (twenty-nine per cent of total income) including admission fees, sales from museum shops, and revenues from such facilities as parking lots and restaurants. Admission fees generated approximately one-third of the operating revenues.
- Non-operating revenues (thirteen per cent of total income) including income on investments which represented the primary source of non-operating revenues.

Eighty-three per cent of all private sector income went to private non-profit museums, ten per cent to government operated museums, and seven

per cent to educational institution museums. Income from the private sector accounted for more than one-half of the total income in museums of all budget sizes.

The sources of income from the public sector were:

- Municipal-County government (eighteen per cent of total income), of which forty-eight per cent went to municipal-county museums, forty-six per cent to private non-profit museums, five per cent to state and federal museums, and one per cent to educational institution museums.
- State government (seven per cent of total income), of which sixty-one per cent went to state museums, thirty-two per cent to private non-profit museums, six per cent to educational institution museums, and one per cent to municipal-county and federal museums.
- Federal government (twelve per cent of total income), of which seventy-eight per cent went to federal museums, seventeen per cent to private non-profit museums, three per cent to educational institution museums, and two per cent to state and municipal-county museums.

Sixty-three per cent of all public support went to government operated museums, thirty-four per cent to private non-profit museums, and three per cent to educational institution museums. A considerable part of the funds received by public educational institution museums from the educational institutions came from government sources, particularly state government. Thus the support received by educational institution museums from the public sector, directly and indirectly, is clearly greater than three per cent. The percentage of income received from the public sector decreases as the budget size of the museum increases, from forty-five per cent in museums under $100,000 to thirty-three per cent in museums of $1,000,000 and over.

operating expenditures

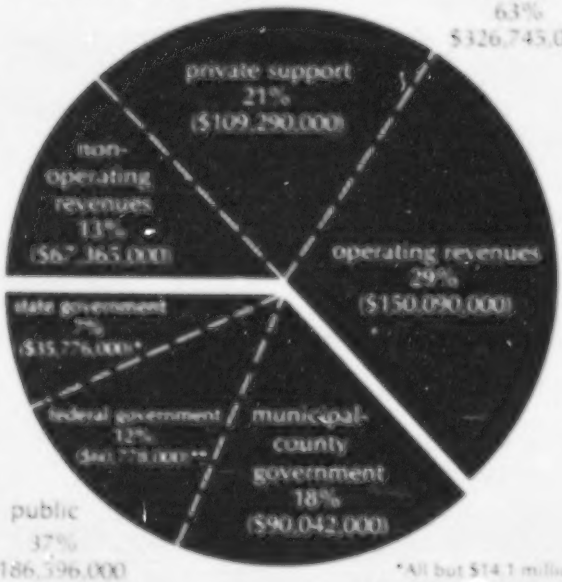
In fiscal 1971-72, the total operating expenditures for the 1821 museums were $478,912,000. (This amount excludes extraordinary expenditures such as those for major capital improvements or acquisitions for collections.) Fifty-nine per cent of all operating expenditures was expended for personnel. A distribution of the total operating budget among museum program areas shows the two largest expense areas to be operations and support (including custodial, security, and sales services) and administration.

The percentage spent on administration declines steadily as the budget size of the museum increases.

The forty-four per cent of museums with budgets under $50,000 accounted for four per cent of the total operating expenditures; the ten per cent of museums with budgets of $500,000 and over accounted for sixty-nine per cent of the total operating expenditures.

While fifty-five per cent of the museums did have some unexpended income at year end and twenty-four per cent managed to or were legally required to break even, twenty-one per cent of the museums had a deficit after exhausting all sources of income. For those museums with unexpended income, the surplus often means simply that they were able to plan and budget ahead for the following year with some degree of confidence. These figures in no way reflect to what degree museums may have restricted activities they want to and should undertake to meet the needs of their disciplines and of their publics.

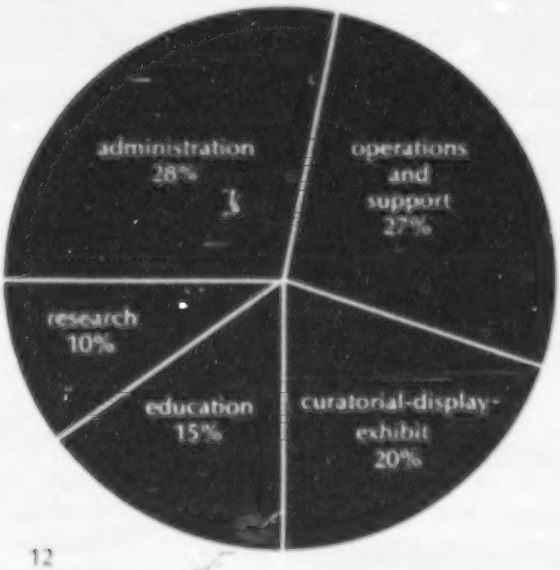
museum income
fy 1971-72 ($513,341,000)



*All but $14.1 million went to state museums.

**All but $13.5 million went to federal museums.

areas of expenditures
fy 1971-72 ($478,912,000)



programs

Despite the great diversity in museum type, size, governing authority, and location, there is strong agreement among the nation's museum directors on the basic purposes (goals) of museums and the functions (activities) necessary to realize these purposes. When directors evaluate the relative importance of six given museum purposes, ninety-two per cent rate as very important providing educational experiences for the public. Eighty-four per cent rate as very important conserving the cultural and/or scientific heritage, seventy-eight per cent interpreting the past or present to the public, forty-nine per cent providing aesthetic experiences for the public, seventeen per cent encouraging positive social change, and seventeen per cent providing entertainment to the public.

When judging the relative importance of ten given museum functions, eighty-four per cent of the directors list exhibiting the cultural and/or scientific heritage as very important. Conservation and preservation of objects is ranked very important by eighty-two per cent, providing instruction to the young by seventy-one per cent, providing a scholarly and information resource by sixty-two per cent, and acquiring works or specimens by fifty-six per cent.

This ranking of importance is generally repeated in the directors' evaluation of the two purposes and the two functions most important for their own museums, the two the museum has satisfied most successfully, and the two the museum trustees and the public consider most important. (The major exceptions are that the directors believe the public places a higher priority on being entertained as a museum purpose and on attracting tourists to the community as a museum function.)

The emphasis museums place on education is reflected in the types of programs conducted. In addition to the inherent educational value of exhibitions, the overwhelming majority of the museums either regularly or occasionally schedule some type of educational activity directed to a specific audience. The most frequently scheduled programs are for groups of school children visiting the museum. Seventy-three per cent of the museums regularly schedule activities for such

groups, twenty per cent occasionally schedule these activities, and seven per cent never schedule these activities. Sixty-two per cent have programs, either regularly or occasionally, for school children outside of school groups and fifty-six per cent make presentations at schools.

The great majority of the museums schedule with some frequency educational activities for the general public and for adults: Eighty-three per cent conduct tours and gallery talks for general groups and sixty-nine per cent have lectures, classes, clubs, and study groups for adults.

exhibitions

More than two-thirds of the museums had special exhibitions in 1971-72. Most of these exhibitions were developed by the museums where they were shown rather than by an outside source. A majority of the thirty-two per cent that did not have special exhibitions would like to offer them but are unable to do so primarily because they lack space and funds. Thirty-four per cent of all museums sent out traveling exhibitions during the year. The most frequent recipients of the exhibitions were other museums and colleges or universities.

Of the ninety-nine per cent of museums that borrow and/or loan objects or collections, twenty-nine per cent report an increase in this practice since 1966. Nine per cent report a decline, citing as the major reasons high cost and, more importantly, risk of damage or loss.

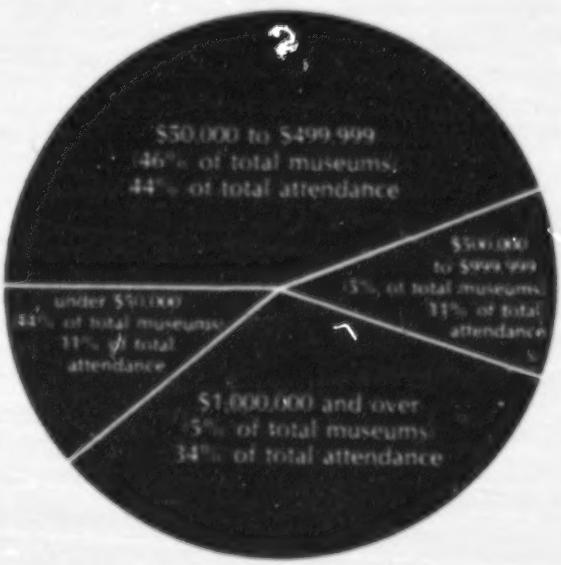
attendance and accessibility

A total of 308,205,000 visits were made to the 1821 museums in fiscal 1971-72. The greatest percentage of attendance was general attendance (including attendance at special exhibitions), followed by elementary and secondary school classes. Thirty-eight per cent of all visits were made to science museums, twenty-four per cent to history museums, and fourteen per cent to art museums. A majority of the attendance (fifty-five per cent) occurred at government museums.

A comparison of attendance figures by budget size demonstrates the impact of the larger museums on the pattern of attendance. Museums with budgets of $1,000,000 and over, which represent only five per cent of the nation's museums,

account for thirty-four per cent of the total attendance. Museums with budgets under $50,000, which represent forty-four per cent of the museums, account for eleven per cent. A similar pattern occurs in the distribution of attendance by region. The Northeast, with the highest percentage of large museums ($500,000 and over), has twenty-nine per cent of the total attendance—proportionately higher than either its share of museums (seventeen per cent) or population (twenty-one per cent). New England, with a much lower percentage of large museums, has five per cent of the attendance—proportionately lower than its share of museums (thirteen per cent) and the same as its share of population.

museum attendance
fy 1971-72 (308,205,000)



proportion of total attendance by museum budget size

The accessibility of the museum to the public is measured by admission policy and by the amount of time museum facilities are open. Of the 1821 museums, fifty-nine per cent have free admission at all times. Thirty-seven per cent charge an admission fee and four per cent request a donation. (Seventy-three per cent of those now charging a fee or requesting a donation have been doing so for more than five years.) Among those museums that now charge a fee, only seventeen per cent believe that this policy has resulted in a significant decrease in attendance.

Museums are open an average of approximately eleven months a year and more than forty-five hours a week. In 1971-72, seventy-nine per cent of the museums were open during all twelve months of the year. While a majority (sixty-five per cent) were open about the same number of hours as they were in 1966, twenty-four per cent were open more hours. Eleven per cent of the museums reduced their hours in this period.

trustees

Seventy-six per cent of the museums have a board of trustees or an equivalent body. The overwhelming majority of private non-profit museums (ninety-three per cent) have boards, compared with fifty-nine per cent of all government museums and forty per cent of educational institution museums (other than the board of the parent institution). Of those museums without boards, approximately one-half are governed by a government agency and one-quarter are governed by a university or college.

Approximately two-thirds of all trustees are either business executives (twenty-four per cent), volunteers active in civic affairs but not otherwise employed (twenty-one per cent), or lawyers, bankers/accountants/financial experts, and educators (twenty-one per cent).

In the museum directors' evaluation of reasons for the selection of current trustees, eighty-three per cent cite the trustees' interest in the museum aside from contributions and seventy-two per cent cite expertise in administrative areas of value to the museum. Approximately one-third of the directors mention the ability of trustees to raise or to contribute funds. (While this reason for selection

of trustees is rated relatively low, directors report that in fiscal 1971-72 an average of sixteen per cent of the private contributions to museums were received from trustees.)

Eighty-three per cent of the directors rate as satisfactory the degree of involvement of the board as a group in non-financial program decisions related to exhibitions, collections, and acquisitions. Yet only forty-seven per cent feel the board is very well informed about the museum's programs and operations. Sixty-two per cent of the directors feel the board is very well informed about the financial situation of the museum.

personnel

The total museum work force, including volunteers, numbers more than 110,000. Of this number, 30,400 are full-time paid personnel—11,000 professionals and 19,400 non-professionals—and 18,700 are part-time paid personnel. A total of 64,200 volunteers are utilized. The average annual salary of full-time professional personnel ranges from $8,100 in museums with budgets under $50,000 to $13,600 in museums with budgets of $1,000,000 and over. The equivalent salary range for full-time non-professional personnel is $4,400 to $7,300. The average annual salary of museum directors ranges from $9,000 in museums with budgets under $50,000 to $33,200 in museums with budgets of $1,000,000 and over.

Eighty-four per cent of the museums employ part-time personnel and sixty per cent use volunteers. A distribution of the full-time personnel by budget size shows that the five per cent of museums with operating budgets of $1,000,000 and over employ forty-five per cent of all full-time personnel. The forty-four per cent of museums with budgets under $50,000 employ nine per cent.

The largest proportion of full-time personnel works in the area of operations and support (forty-five per cent), followed by administration (twenty-three per cent), curatorial, display, and exhibit (seventeen per cent), education (nine per cent), and research (six per cent). In each of the areas, except for operations and support in which ninety per cent of the employees are non-professional, professionals represent a slightly higher proportion

of personnel than non-professionals. The distribution of part-time personnel among job areas roughly parallels that of full-time personnel except that a higher proportion of part-time staff is involved in education. Approximately fifty per cent or more of the museum directors specify the need for additional staff in each of the five job categories: This ranges from forty-seven per cent in the research area to sixty-one per cent in curatorial, display, and exhibit.

facilities

The primary facilities of forty-one per cent of the nation's museums are thirty or more years old; twenty per cent of the museums are using facilities that are more than fifty years old. Separate facilities have been constructed or acquired by fifty-nine per cent of the museums, in most cases since 1950.

Less than one-half of the museums for which the items are applicable rate any of ten given aspects of exhibition and storage space, except for available exterior space, as fully adequate. Museums cite also specific facilities that they do not have but do need. The most frequently mentioned need is facilities for preservation, restoration, or reconstruction of the collection (thirty-three per cent). (This is also the item considered less than fully adequate by the highest percentage of museums with such facilities.) Among the other needed facilities are: auditorium and theatre (thirty-two per cent), separate exhibitions or galleries for children (thirty-two per cent), classrooms, lecture rooms, and studios (twenty-nine per cent), workshop (twenty-four per cent), members' facilities (twenty-two per cent), and storage space for the collection (fifteen per cent).

financial status

Since 1966, operating costs have increased in nine out of ten museums, with a median increase of thirty-nine per cent in those museums. Expansion and improvement in programs, facilities, and collections contributed to this increase, but the primary reasons for the cost rise were higher salaries and inflation. Financial pressures have resulted in the past five years in cutbacks in facilities, services, or staff in thirty-six per cent of all museums. Reductions in staff, both professional

and non-professional, were the most frequently mentioned cutbacks, followed by reductions in equipment and building maintenance. Of all museum types, art had the highest proportion of museums in which cutbacks were necessary. Among budget sizes, the proportion of museums in which cutbacks were necessary was highest in the $250,000 to $499,999 category; and among governing authorities, the proportion was highest in educational institutions.

Sixty-six per cent of the museum directors find that their current operating budget does not enable full utilization of the facilities, exhibits, collections, staff, and other resources of the museum. To achieve full utilization, directors estimate that a median budget increase of forty-five per cent is needed in the next two to three years. If additional funds were secured for short-term needs, fifty per cent of the museums currently operating below capacity would add to existing staff. Forty-one per cent would use additional funds for exhibitions and displays and twenty-one per cent would use funds for educational programs. Seventeen per cent would spend funds on collections and acquisitions, seventeen per cent on improvement and renovation of facilities, thirteen per cent on new building and more space, eleven per cent on research and scholarship, and ten per cent on conservation and preservation of collections.

In addition to short-term needs, directors cite the primary areas in which increased funding would be used in the next five to ten years: Forty-nine per cent mention staff, forty-one per cent new building and more space, and thirty-four per cent exhibitions and displays. Nineteen per cent would use additional funds for improvement and renovation of facilities, seventeen per cent both for collections and acquisitions and for facilities and equipment, and sixteen per cent for educational programs. Thus museum directors perceive little difference in their short-term needs and their long-term needs. Whether looking ahead for two to three years or for five to ten years, directors give high priority to improvements in staff, exhibitions, and facilities.

As an additional measure of the financial needs of museums, directors rate the seriousness of need in specific areas of operation applicable to their museum. Fifty-one per cent consider very serious the need for additional funds for major new construction. Thirty-eight per cent rate as very serious the need for staff and programs in the two areas of education and of curatorial, display, and exhibit. Approximately one-third of the museums express a very serious need for additional funds for climate control, for security, and for conservation.

In a great majority of all the museums, current expenditures for climate control, security, and conservation are considered inadequate; directors estimate that average fund increases ranging from forty-six per cent to fifty-eight per cent are required to meet immediate needs in this area.

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